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RESTORATION INSTITUTE

Overview

- Descriptions of Collaboration and Collaborative Learning (CL)

- Implementation of CL

- Case histories:

  - USFS as context

  - Wyoming Game and Fish Department as context

- References (Daniels and Walker, Barbara Gray, S. Burns and Cheng).

Why Collaboration and Collaborative Learning?

- USFS: Healthy Forest Restoration Act, Collaborative Federal Lands Act, CWPP, National Fire Plan, etc.

- Public participation tool for complex, conflict situations.

- Creates continuous, sustainable "table of trust" to return to over time, builds relationships, creates social, place-based capacity.

Introductory Note

- Based on Colorado and Wyoming examples but there are examples of CL efforts all over the country.

- All situations and CL approaches are different.

- Presentation simplifies many people's work. See websites with literature and resources in the back.

Fundamental Paradox

People want to have a voice in public decisions that affect their lives but how can that voice be meaningful if the terms, concepts and technical trade-offs are new or distrusted by them?

What is Collaboration?

A process in which interdependent parties work together to affect the future of an issue of shared interests. Five features are critical:

1. Stakeholders are interdependent.

2. Solutions emerge by dealing constructively with differences that otherwise would not.

3. Joint ownership of decisions is involved.

4. Stakeholders assume collective responsibility for the future direction of the situation.

5. Collaboration is an emergent property.

What is Collaborative Learning?

• Collaboration is an iterative process and Collaborative Learning is the mechanism that facilitates each iteration.

• A framework and set of techniques intended for multiparty learning and decision situations.

• It means designing and implementing events (meetings, field trips, etc.) to promote creative thought, constructive debate and effective implementation of proposals.

• Appropriate when there are multiple stakeholders who are interdependent (affected by same situation) and independent because they have different values and views.

• Suitable for NRM situations that contain

a. conflict

b. complexity (wicked).

Note: When CL may not work

Sometimes Collaborative Learning is not the right approach e.g. if:

- Low conflict situation.

- There is low collaborative capacity within the convener organization/agency.

- BATNA's are likely to dominate CL outcomes (Better Alternative To Negotiated Agreement).

CL Principles

- Adult Learning Theory (see below)
- Systems Thinking: Seeing interrelationships and processes of change rather than linear cause-effects and snapshots.
- Shared Values: Discovery of shared values is at the root of creating trust and productive communications.
- Listening, Dialogue and Deliberation.

Three Dimensions of The Progress Triangle

Substance (Issue)

Procedure (Process)

Relationship (Stakeholders)
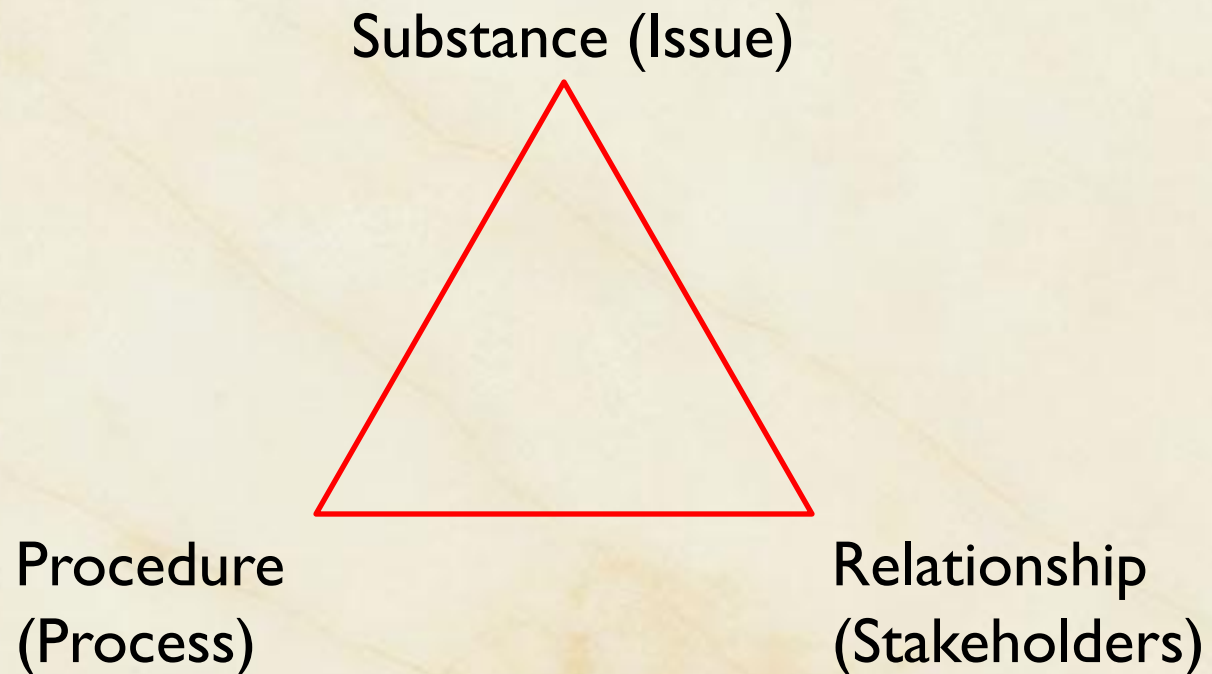
Three Dimensions of the Progress Triangle

- Three interrelated dimensions.

- Emphasis on *progress* rather than *success*.

- Meaningful progress is a more reasonable burden that invites collaboration rather than adversarial competition (or insistence on solutions).

Characteristics of Collaborative Learning

- Stresses improvement rather than solution.
- Emphasizes situation and progress rather than problem and conflict.
- Focuses on concerns and interests not positions.
- Encourages interrelated systems thinking rather than linear thinking.
- Recognizes that considerable learning (about science issues, and value differences) will have to occur before implementable improvements are possible.
- Emphasizes that learning and progress occur through communication and negotiation interaction.

Adult Learning

- In CL (in most situations) we are working with <u>adult learners</u>, not children.
- With adult learners the objective is transference of information, not education.
- Different learning styles, experience, personalities, etc.
- Requires providing information in accessible ways, allowing for adults to triangulate information with their values, previous knowledge, personality, etc. through discussion. Hence individual and small group activities.
- Legitimacy of information rooted in science but also the presenter, and his/her willingness to learn from fellow learners.

Implementation of CL

1. Assessment of Relationship, Procedure and Substance Dimensions (see Progress Triangle).
2. CL Training – Internal (and External)
3. Design CL Process
4. Implement CL Process
5. Evaluation.

General Phases in CL Process with Diverse Stakeholders.

1. Identify issues, describe situation.
2. Identify improvements, desirable future/ conditions.
3. Identify what is feasible within legal, financial, biophysical, etc. constraints.
4. Create a platform that allows continued CL, often combined with adaptive management (Forest Plan, CWPP, habitat management plan, monitoring plan).

Tools

- A facilitator who is experienced in CL.
- Interactive Workshops.
- Field trips.
- Documentation
- Social Science that describes "silent majority"
- Participatory monitoring and/or research.
- Concept/Situation Mapping Exercises
- GIS as a learning tool using multiple layers.
- Web-based tools.

Keys to Success (Schuett et al. 2001)

Study of participants in 30 CL efforts around the country –categories of themes emerged of keys to success:

1. Development: identify goal, purpose and stakeholders, develop ground rules, agendas, time for homework.

2. Information Exchange: e.g. available research, informed stakeholders, progress updates.

3. Organizational Support: well-organized meetings, funding, staff, coffee.

4. Personal Communication: Communication skills - Listening, understanding, Discussion. Environment conducive to free exchange of opinions, "safe".

5. Relationships/Team Building: Results of Communication -Trust, respect and honesty.

6. Accomplishments (Monitoring/Habitat Management/Prescribed Fire/Restoration Plan)

See also Burns and Cheng Report (2005) – "The Utilization of Collaborative Processes in Forest Planning".

Example of Individual and Small Group Activities

- Individual: Hand out blank cards when participants (incl. agency) arrive and ask them to describe the best and worst possible future for the situation/place.
- Individual: Provide form to write down concerns and interests.
- Small group: Break-out groups to describe situation (e.g. using situation maps).
- Small group: Break-out group to articulate desired conditions on flipcharts.

Advantages:
- Allows individuals to digest and triangulate information internally and provide language in their own words.
- Allows learning to be shared in groups.
- Provides data to inform next phase in CL

Considerations related to CL

- Takes time, staff and costs in the short run.

- Takes active, meaningful support throughout convening organization and other stakeholders.

- Requires open mindedness and active listening skills.

- Take preconceptions and agency/community culture into consideration.

- Also takes time and travel for participants.

- All less of an issue if there is progress.

Uncompahgre Partnership
Collaboration & Restoration in Western Colorado

Why Did We Initiate a Collaborative Approach?

- Desire to work at a landscape scale.

- Desire to resolve conflict.

- Desire to balance economic, cultural, social and ecological values.

Who Is Involved?

- US Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Mgt.
- CO Division of Wildlife
- Tri-State G&T

- Western Area Power Administration
- Unc/Com (Public Lands Partnership)

- CO State Forest Service
- Universities
- Industry
- Conservation Groups
- Recreation Groups

- Local Government
- Permittees
- Interest Community
- National Park Service
- NRCS

What Have the Outcomes Been?

- Several landscape assessments and treatment efforts
- Initiation of a Native Plant Program
- Initiation of Coordinated Weed Mgt Plans
- Significant leveraging of funds through grants

Wyoming Range Mule Deer Initiative
Wyoming Game And Fish Department

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Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd ...a brief history

- Large numbers of deer for decades
  - 50s and 60s the "good ol' days": lots of deer.
  - Deer numbers, combined with other environmental factors, some anthropogenic, led to declines in habitat health
- 1990's: WGFD took measures that were controversial and lead to the "Deer Wars". Habitat degradation plus a "killing winter" lead to additional drop in population.
- 2000's: Deer numbers have still not rebounded, and the objective is not met. Habitat conditions have not improved drastically, despite restoration work, due to urban and resource development, especially in crucial winter range.

Why Collaboration?

- WGFD launches the Wyoming Mule Deer Initiative. Managers identify public involvement and public understanding as two main problems on Wyoming Range.

- Based on attitude survey, it is decided that information alone is not sufficient

- Levels of mistrust are deep and the need for conversation dire: an in-depth process must be conducted.

- Presenting data will not move people out of their long-held stances; it would only exacerbate the problem since some in the public were still skeptical of WGFD

- A process had to be initiated where people sat face to face with each other and talked about each side of the issue. There was a strong need for people to come to an understanding about the issues affecting the mule deer and how everyone could work together to help the deer that were equally revered.

CL-A Timeline

- 2007: WGFD managers meet re. the Wyoming Range mule deer
- 2008: Social science attitude survey completed
- 2009: WGFD is trained on collaborative learning (Jess)
  - All managers agree that they are willing to try collaborative learning
- 2010/2011: WGFD initiates and conducts collaborative learning process for the Wyoming Range mule deer herd (supported by CFRI/Jess).
- 2011: The Wyoming Range Mule Deer Management Plan will be presented to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission.

CL-The Process and Stakeholders

- 3 sets of meetings held in 4 communities in Western Wyoming
  - June, August, February (timing matters!)
  - Facilitated by an outside facilitator (neutrality matters!)
- Information is presented at each meeting so we are all on the same page
  - Round 1: What are the issues re. mule deer?
  - Round 2: What are solutions to the main issues?
  - Round 3: Presentation of draft plan to the public
- Meetings were open to the public
- Some identified stakeholders were specifically invited:
  - Avid and long-time hunters
  - Landowners
  - Outfitters
  - Federal managers (USFS, BLM)
  - Commissioners
  - Legislators

CL-The Outcomes

- Participation was very good from a cross-section of the Wyoming Range public
  - 157 people over the course of meetings; 56 attended at least 2 meetings, 23 attended all
- Public was vocally supportive of the process
  - Appreciated that WGFD was really listening to what they had to say (CFRI conducting full evaluation).
- Higher levels of trust exist, individual relationships were improved, and a conversation has begun
- WGFD will continue to go back to the public yearly to update and continue the adaptive management process

Lessons Learned

- No WGFD authority was given over to the public; the plan was written inclusive of collaborative learning input, social science and biological constraints

- The willingness to listen without judgment opened lines of communication

- Sitting alongside members of the community as their neighbors fostered an even playing field

- Collaborative learning can work!

Conclusion

- CL is inclusive, transparent, process-driven that allows learning and outcomes to be shared to the extent possible.

- Takes time, money and effort.

- CL can take place in different ways – depends on place, people, issues, etc.

- CL requires an open mind, real listening and honesty.

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Advantages of CL

- A flexible, iterative process that enables experimentation based on a multiparty collaborative approach.

- Create a process that builds trust and communication, allowing for long term resilience in the face of unexpected managerial outcomes or biophysical extremes.

- A way to combine meaningful public participation and adaptive management.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

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Resources:

Huge literature, see:

•National Forest Foundation,
•Pinchot Institute,
•Public Disputes Program at Harvard U.,
•Red Lodge Clearinghouse,
•Ecological Restoration Institute,
•Fire Consortia
•The Nature Conservancy Fire Learning Networks
•USDA Forest Service websites.